



mecc
making every contact count

OUT and ABOUT

Keeping life socially fulfilling, inspiring and fun

*MECC is a joint initiative of Meals on Wheels SA,
Aged and Community Services and SA Health.*

As humans we crave connections with others. We need social interaction to be physically and mentally healthy and happy. The connections we have with family, friends and the community provide us with security and support, and without these we become lonely.



DID YOU KNOW...

Research shows that people can recover from loneliness through volunteering. Speak with your local council to find out about volunteer positions in your area.



Feeling lonely is a normal human emotion. It is simply a sign of wanting contact with people. However, loneliness does not have to be an inevitable part of getting older; building strong social connections will help you to avoid loneliness.

Having someone to talk to and support you is important. It is social connections like these that will result in:

- A better quality of life and satisfaction of life
- Needing less domestic support and enjoying greater independence
- Delayed progression of dementia and mental decline

If you feel that you are lacking in social connections on a day-to-day basis, or know someone who might be lonely, we have some tips to help you build relationships in your community.



HOW CONNECTED ARE YOU?

Before working on your social connections it can be useful to answer the question “how connected am I?”

The questionnaire below may help you to answer this question.

How often do you:

- 1.** Get together with friends and family for outings, meals or special events?
- 2.** Stop for a chat, talk on the phone or chat online with other people?
- 3.** Help someone else or volunteer for friends, family or the community?
- 4.** Attend community events?
- 5.** Attend a formal or informal interest group (eg. book club)?



SET SOME GOALS

Now that you have a better understanding of your current social connections, you can set yourself some goals. The form below may help you with this.

What activities do I enjoy?

My goals (ie. meeting like minded people for weekly social events):

Next steps (ie. call the local council):

Outcomes (to be completed after building your connections):

TOP TIP

Start small. Try something within your comfort zone to begin with, and slowly build up to making bigger lifestyle changes.



FINDING THE RIGHT ACTIVITY FOR YOU

There are different ways to stay connected so we have put together a few ideas to help you get started.

Group activities

Research has found that joining group activities can be particularly effective at reducing and protecting against loneliness. Some ways to become part of a group activity are:

- Invite others out for a meal. This may be at a restaurant or café, a picnic in the park or at your home or someone else's. If you're a Meals on Wheels customer they can assist with organising a group meal through their program.
- Join an organised club. There are many different clubs out there that you can join, whether it be an outdoor activity, like bird watching, or indoor like a book club.
- Group fitness. Many gyms or councils hold special group fitness classes or events for those over 65.

DID YOU KNOW...

Physical activity later in life can reduce the risk of developing long-term physical health conditions, depression and dementia, as well as increasing the chances of healthy aging.





Support your community

Volunteering offers the dual benefits of meeting new people and contributing to your local community or a meaningful cause. Research shows that volunteering has a positive effect on physical and mental wellbeing. Some organisations that are regularly looking for new volunteers include: Meals on Wheels, Local Government and Rotary.

Contact Volunteering Australia for more information about opportunities available near you, on 1300 135 545 or at volunteeringsa.org.au.

Stay connected online

The internet can help you to connect with family and friends who no longer live nearby. E-mail, social networking sites and video calls are great ways to stay in touch without much effort.

If you're new to the online world, start by creating an email address. Speak to a family member or friend who can assist you with setting this up, or your local librarian may be able to help also.

Already have an online presence and looking to grow your reach? University of the Third Age (U3A) Online is accessible to anyone with an internet connection and gives you access to over 45 self-paced short courses. On top of this you can access the members' lounge where you can take part in online social forums, live chat, wikis (knowledge exchange) and online games. To find out more visit u3aonline.org.au or call **08 8359 3307**.



If you're interested in growing your knowledge of the online, including social media, Broadband for Seniors is a program that can help you to develop your computer skills. For more information visit necseniors.net.au or call 1300 795 897.

Have a conversation

It sounds simple, but having regular conversations with other people is an important way to stay connected. Pop over to your neighbour's house for a cup of tea or organise a catch up with friends at the park. Or if you're looking for new people to talk to look into Probus at probussouthpacific.org or call 1300 630 488.





IT'S TIME TO GET OUT AND ABOUT

There are many options out there when trying to build your social connections and it's important to find activities you enjoy, can physically take part in and that are nearby.

Start by checking the following locations:

- Visit your local council to find out about local groups or programs
- Read your local newspaper or pamphlets for upcoming activities, events and other opportunities
- Visit your local centres, such as senior centre, library or other community spaces, to find out what they offer
- Your GP may also have information on activities in your area

If you are still trying to identify your options, speak with a friend, neighbour, or someone who is already taking part in one of these activities to assist you with making a decision.

MECC: MAKING EVERY CONTACT COUNT

MECC is about embracing opportunities to talk to people about their health and wellbeing using the skills of asking and listening. MECC recognises the importance of good health and wants to support you to live independently.



Making Every Contact Count (MECC)
SA is a joint initiative of Meals on Wheels SA Inc,
Aged and Community Services SA & NT and SA Health.

MECC SA is based on the UK model, find out more at
makingeverycontactcount.co.uk.

